

CHILD WELFARE UPDATE

Title:	Adoption Selection Statewide Process
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Background Information:	<p>Background Information: The Iowa Department of Human Services' (DHS) Adoption Selection process is designed to secure permanent families for children who have been removed from the care of their parent due to abuse or denial of care, cannot be reunited with their parent, and when termination of parental rights has occurred. Adoption provides the child and new parents with the same legal rights and responsibilities as if the child were born into the adoptive family.</p> <p>When DHS is appointed guardian of a child following the termination of parental rights, DHS has both the duty and the authority to select an adoptive placement for that child. In order to fulfil this duty, the DHS must hold a conference pursuant to Iowa Administrative Code section 441-200.4(3), during which the DHS selects an adoptive family for an identified child. At the conference, known as an Adoption Selection Staffing, each interested family with an approved Adoption, or Interstate Compact home study will be considered. The team members of the Adoption Selection Committee will determine which family will be able to best meet the needs of the child going forward. The Adoption Selection Staffing Process is conducted with the ultimate goal of selecting an adoptive family that will be in the child's best interests. The process has three components including the following: 1) Guiding Principles, 2) Engagement and</p>

	<p>input from parties, including the child and family, 3) an Adoption Selection Committee, and 4) a placement decision and related notifications</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement: Various internal stakeholders were engaged in the clarification of process including representatives from DHS policy and field operations. New guidance was developed through an adoption selection “Lean” design event, which took place in October 2020. Participants included Adoption Supervisors, Adoption Workers, a SWCM, two Social Work Administrators and Policy staff.</p> <p>Reason for the Change: Adoption staff statewide were completing the adoption selection process differently. For example, some areas of the state were not conducting interviews of the potential adoptive families to assist with decision-making. In addition, some service areas were allowing non-DHS staff to participate in the adoption selection committee. In 2019, a Court of Appeals decision was issued which very clearly outlined some inconsistencies in how the adoption selection was being accomplished. A Lean Event occurred in October 2020 in order to address some of these inconsistencies.</p>
<p>What Is Changing:</p>	<p>What Is Changing: Process for the Adoption Selection Statewide Process was revised to align practice statewide and according to existing administrative rules. Guidance and training has made it more clear how DHS staff are to complete the adoption selection process when one potential family is identified for a specific child as well as the process when more than one potential family makes application for a specific child. There may be some minor changes in practice for each different service area. This is meant to be a clarifying process on the existing rules and practices for adoption selection statewide.</p> <p>Who Is Impacted: DHS Adoption Staff will be impacted by the clarification in practice. This will also impact DHS external court partners who may or may not agree with the placements decisions made through this process.</p>
<p>What Is Not Changing:</p>	<p>Currently under this guidance, there are no Administrative rules or policy changes.</p>
<p>Expected Benefits:</p>	<p>Statewide consistency in practice and outcomes.</p>